Pacific Northwest Water Quality Data Exchange

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Biographical Sketch of Author

Curtis Cude is the project coordinator for the Pacific Northwest Water Quality Data Exchange. His training is in chemistry and experience over the past 10 years with Oregon DEQ includes water quality monitoring, data management, and data analysis, including development and implementation of the Oregon Water Quality Index. Curtis is an alternate member (representing Region 10 states) on the National Water Quality Monitoring Council.

Abstract

Water quality and water related issues (such as Total Maximum Daily Load or the Endangered Species Act listing of several salmonid populations) are the most critical environmental issues in the Pacific Northwest. There is an unprecedented need for sharing of watershed data across jurisdictional boundaries. The major obstacles to such sharing are:

- A reliable mechanism does not exist to catalog available data, and to discover what is available.

- Data is of highly variable quality.

- There is significant professional disagreement about the inclusion of poor quality data in any collection.

The environmental agencies of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington and EPA Region 10 created the Pacific Northwest (PNW) Water Quality Data Exchange (the Exchange) to enhance the ability of the PNW scientific community to discover and gain access to data which may suit their purposes. The Exchange will develop a consortium of sources of water-related data throughout the PNW to include the traditional regulatory community as well as agencies in closely related mission areas (e.g. Fish and Wildlife Management agencies). Data may be made available on the network, regardless of quality, provided that the supplier agrees to document what is known of data quality. The technological "bar" for participation will be set as low as possible, which is crucial to developing broad participation. The Exchange has developed a location-based front end for data access. This data access tool will be demonstrated and project background, goals, and progress will be discussed.